

**George Washington to Norborne Berkeley, Baron de Botetourt, December 8, 1769, Draft, The Writings of George Washington from the Original Manuscript Sources, 1745-1799. John C. Fitzpatrick, Editor.**

**\*To LORD BOTETOURT<sup>1</sup>**

December 8, 1769.

My Lord: When I had the hon'r of seeing your Lordship in May last, I took the liberty of mentioning, in a cursory manner, the claim of Sundry Officers of the first Troops raisd in this Colony in behalf of themselves, and the Soldiery of that day, to certain Lands westward of the Aligany Mountains which they humbly conceivd themselves entitled to under and by virtue of a Proclamation of Governor Dinwiddie's; but the number of Grants which appear upon the Council Books, the number of Petitions depending before and exhibited to that hon'ble Board for more Lands, a copy of which by your Excellency's orders the House have seen, renders it necessary in my humble opinion to give your Lordship the trouble of receiving a more full and perfect State of the nature of our claim to this quantity of Land containd in the Pro'c and the inevitable consequences which must follow a delay.

In order to do this, my Lord two things may be necessary for me to premise, and those are the number of Men which were raisd under, and by means of that Proclamation, and the terms upon which they engaged.

In respect to the first the Council journals, and other records of 1754 will proove that 300 was the number of Men which were voted for the purpose of Erecting a Fort at the Forks

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of Monongahele and the Proclamation in the Month of Feby. the same year affords ample testimony of the latter. I shall therefore beg leave to refer your Lordship to it.

Small as the number may seem, it is a Fact nevertheless well known, that the difficulty of enlisting them at that time, in an Infant Country unaccustomd to War, was not more clearly foreseen, than evidently experienced; and evinced to the World the Policy of the then adopted measure to procure Men for a Service which at one view appeard new, difficult, and hazardous, from the length of the March, uninhabited Country, and almost inaccessible Mountains, which were to be passed.

But let the motives which gave rise to this Proclamation have been founded in good, or ill policy, most certain it is the terms were offered; the condition were embraced, and to all Intents and purposes considered, as a mutual contract between the Governm't and Adventurer's; the latter of whom always conceiving that the Lands were as firmly engaged to them as their pay, have omitted no opportunity since of avowing their Pretensions to it.

It is humbly hopd therefore, that your Lordship and Council will be pleas'd to take the matter into consideration, for the reasons which have been offered, but more especially for the two which follow.

One half of the Land promised by the Proclamation is to be laid of contiguous to the Forks of Monongahela, consequently cannot interfere in any manner whatsoever with the boundary lines, admitting, that the most contracted one, is finally established. And next, because the Country in general, but more especially that part of it where the first quantity is located, is settling very fast, and of course, every good, and fertile spot will be engrossd and occupied by others, whilst none but barren Hills, and rugged Mountains; will be left to those, who have toild, and bled for the Country, and whose right to a part of it is fixed by the strongest Assurances which Governm't coud give them so long ago as 1754. Unavailing is it to say, that these settlements of individuals illegal in their nature, are not to be respected, to remove them, woud proore a Work of great difficulty; perhaps of equal

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cruelty, as most of these People are poor swarming with large Families, have sought out these retreats on which perhaps their future prospects in like way wholly depend.

Thus my Lord I have endeavoured to give your Lordship a genl. view of the nature of our claim, and of the peculiar hardships which must follow the restriction of our Surveying of it; I shall now beg leave to mention one thing more which occurs on this subject and that is this,

It has been distantly askd, for I must own I never heard the matter regularly questiond, whether the Troops employd in the subsequent campaigns were not entitled to a share also of this 200,000 Acres of Land? to this it may answer'd, that a moments recurrence to the state of Affairs in 1754 and the occ'n of raising Troops at that early period will demonstrate at once the Impropriety of such expect'ns if any such there be; For 300 Men were adjudgd suffic't to the Service then under contemplation, and 200,000 Acres of Land was offered as a bounty to obtain them; and though the number proovd insuff't to accomplish the purpose for w'ch they were rais'd (as thousands afterwards likewise did) yet it is a Fact very well know that this body of Troops did actually advance into the Country claimd by the Enemy, and built a Fort there which they were obligd to surrender to sup'r num'brs.

Besides, they woud beg leave to make this one observation more, in proof of their exclusive right to this Grant, and that is, that the next Campaign was made by His Majesty's Troops under the Cored. of Genl. Braddock; and that all the Troops enlisted in this Colony after that time; did it upon a quite differ't, and much better establishment, the Officers recg. higher pay, and the Men greater bountys. It must plainly appear therefore, in my humble opinion at least, that the grant of this Land was merely local, con find to that particular enterprize prize then in view, and coud by no means be construed to extend to the multitude which afterwards engagd in the course of a Ten years War. We rest in full hope therefore my Lord that in this opinion your Excellency and the Council will be, and that we shall be orderd the Lands upon the Terms it was granted to us by Proclamation

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and as soon as the Affairs of Governm't can possibly admit of it. I beg your Lordships excuse for the prolixity of this Letter. I was desirous that the whole matter should be clearly stated for your Lordships determination and with all imaginable respect I have the hon'r to be, etc.

P.S. Since writing the above I have been informd by Doctr. Walker that the Lands near the Fort are reserved in the Indian Sale for the Traders. If so, as this woud have been the most valuable moiety of our grant we shall humbly hope to be endulgd (this being an event w'ch could not be foreseen) in laying the like q'ty in some other good spot of Earth rather than wait a determination of that matter in England.<sup>2</sup>

Norborne Berkeley, Baron de Botetourt. He arrived in Virginia in October, 1769, being the first governor in chief who had come to reside in Virginia since Lord Culpeper. He died in October, 1770, respected by the Colonists for his moderation and good judgment.— Ford.

Washington has entered the following notes at the end of his draft of this letter: "If time cannot be obtained to look out the Land, and we are obligd to locate it immediately, in that case do it according to Colo. Lewis's Memm. with Mr. Zalthoe provided none of those spots fall within the reserv'r for the Traders. To be in one or more Surveys, as Land can be found. To be indulged in a Survey or of our own, to avoid the great expence (which the Governm't seemd inclin'd to ease us of) as well as Inconvenience and delay of Employing the County Surveyor." The fort mentioned in the postscript was Fort Pitt. Washington had been appointed by the officers of the Virginia Regiment their attorney to prosecute their claims to these bounty lands. The officers pledged themselves to contribute to defray the expenses of the business. This letter was one of Washington's activities in behalf of his fellow officers. In the Washington Papers, under date of Dec. 15, 1769, is also a draft, in Washington's writing, of the petition "in behalf of himself and the Officers and Soldiers who first Imbarkd in the Service of this Colony" to the lands on the Monongahela, Great Kanawha, and other rivers.